

A person is seen from behind, sitting in a small boat on a beach at night. The moon is full and bright in the dark sky. The ocean waves are visible in the background. The scene is dimly lit, with the moon providing the primary light source.

**Creating Safe Spaces for Those who
experience Racism in the Workplace.**

**PRESENTATION AND
DISCUSSION: 02.06.2022**

About myself

- I am 23 years qualified as a Social Worker.
- Current role: Occupational Social Worker with the Defence Forces.
- Current member of IASW ARAG.
- I lived and worked in Western Australia for 7 years from 2012 to 2019 including in remote aboriginal communities.
- Considerable exposure to reflection and practice considerations regarding cultural security and safety.
- I am no expert! I am learning and seeing the need for lots of talking and thinking about anti-racist practice.

Purpose of the session

- Existing Dignity at work policies do not specifically address racism in the workplace.
- Social Work staff and students are left with nowhere to go when they experience racism in the workplace or on placement.
- It is important as Social Work practitioners to have space to discuss this issue, to think about what needs to happen.
- How can ARAG support this?

Today I will discuss briefly:

- The IASW Anti-Racism Strategic Plan, 2021-2023;
- Personal and professional responsibility;
- ARAG sub-groups and how we are trying to implement and embed this strategic plan into Social Work Practice;
- Unconscious bias; what is it?
- Cultural Security in Social Work Practice;
- Discussion about useful services and tools;
- What can we do?

What is Racism

- **Definition of Racism:**
- **INAR understands RACISM as:** Any action, practice, policy, law, speech, or incident which has the effect (whether intentional or not) of undermining anyone's enjoyment of their human rights, **based on their actual or perceived ethnic or national origin or background**, where that background is that of a **marginalised or historically subordinated group**. Racism carries connotations of violence because the dehumanisation of ethnic groups has been historically enforced through violence. In other words, racism is when an individual, group, structure or institution intentionally or unintentionally abuse their power to the detriment of people, because of their actual or perceived "racialised" background.
- It's important to understand that racism is an ideology from a colonial past which "holds one race superior, while another inferior" in the words Bob Marley used in his song 'War'.

The global definition of Social Work

- “Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, ***social cohesion***, and the ***empowerment and liberation of people***. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and ***respect for diversities*** are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and ***enhance wellbeing***. (IFSW, 2014)

The IASW Anti-Racism Strategy Plan 2020-2023

VALUES & VISION:

- Our Values and Vision based on egalitarian and social justice ethos find expression in this strategic plan's thrust towards achieving racial justice through dismantling racism and its various manifestations. To remain true to our values and mission it is imperative that we change the way we approach and dismantle racism to advance racial equity.

The IASW Anti-Racism Strategy Plan 2020-2023

- **STRATEGIC GOALS & ACTIONS:**

- New streams;
- Education and Research;
- Practice & CPD
- Advocacy and policy
- Communication and accountability;
- Outcome Measures

Professional Standards

- **The CORU Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics:**
- **Domain 1 Standard -9** Recognise the importance of practising in a non-discriminatory, culturally sensitive way and acknowledge and respect the differences in beliefs and cultural practices of individuals or groups
- **Domain 5 Standard 5:** Critically understand and be able to apply principles of social justice in one's work including being able to appropriately challenge negative discrimination and unjust policies and practices.
- **Domain 5 Standard 6:** Demonstrate a critical understanding of cultural competence; and work towards social inclusion

Professional Standards contd;

- **IASW Code of Practice:**

Members must:

- 1. Treat people who use social work services and colleagues with dignity and respect.
- 2. Protect and promote the human rights of those who use social work services to while balancing their rights with those of others.
- 3. Act at all times with regard to the will and preference of those who use social work services to: a. take into account the beliefs and values of those who use social work services;
- 9. Respect diversity and difference.

Members must not:

- 4. Discriminate on the basis of gender, race, religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation. disability or membership of the Traveller community.

The work of the ARAG sub-groups: Embedding cultural security in Social Work practice

The 3 streams/ subgroups are as follows:

- Education and Research;
- Practice & CPD;
- Advocacy & Policy

ARAG Subgroups contd:

- **Education & Research:**

- This group considers how to embed cultural security in Social Work education and research.
- Most recently this group has facilitated pre-placement anti-Racism workshops in UCC with a post-placement workshop planned for September. The aim of this was to raise awareness of issues before the students went on placement.
- The group is also planning to campaign against high fees for social work courses to improve accessibility for marginalised groups.

- **Practice & CPD:**

- CPD online events held last year;
- The focus in 2022 is to be on considering training for Social Work Managers and Practice Teachers to raise awareness regarding racism and the experiences of Student Social Workers.

ARAG Subgroups contd:

- **Advocacy and Policy:**
- This group has been working to establish what anti-racism policies exist in organisations where Social Workers are working if any. At present it appears that Dignity at Work policies and not anti-racism policies exist.
- The issue of the IASW having an Anti-Racism policy is being explored and has been discussed with the IASW Board by Advisory Group members.
- The group are making links with other SIG's in IASW to promote anti-racism awareness and practice

Research: Children Social Care Anti-Racism Report, UK, March 2022

- Survey of nearly 2000 registered social workers.
- This report highlights the toll racism is taking on social workers in England.
- Nearly one in five children and adult social workers who responded to the survey reported that workplace racism had increased their anxiety.
- 10% had considered leaving the organisation due to racism with 8% considering leaving social work entirely.
- 9% had experienced incidents of racism directed at them by colleagues and managers at least 5 times in the previous 12 months;
- 9% reported witnessing service users or families experiencing racism from colleagues or managers.
- 20% witnessed colleagues experiencing racism from service users multiple times;
- 34% of black respondents reported incidents of racism from service users/families compared to 5% of white social workers.

What do all these words mean?

Unconscious Bias; Unconscious bias refers to a **bias that we are unaware of and which happens outside of our control**. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgements and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences.

Harvard Implicit Bias tests:

- <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

Socialisation: the process whereby an individual learns to adjust to a group (or society) and behave in a manner approved by the group (or society).

Microaggression is a term used for **commonplace daily verbal, behavioural or environmental slights, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward stigmatized or culturally marginalized groups**. The term was coined by Harvard University psychiatrist Chester M.

What is Cultural Security/culturally safe practice?

Cultural Competence:

- Definition: the ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from different cultures or belief systems different from ones' own.

Cultural competence compasses:

- being aware of ones' own world view,
- developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences,
- gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views;
- developing skills for communication and interaction.

Cultural Proficiency requires more than becoming culturally aware or practising tolerance. Rather it is the ability to identify and challenge one's own cultural beliefs and to make a commitment to communicating at the cultural interface (National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNIACC)).

Embedding cultural competence in Social Work supervision, the Western Australia experience

- Dept of Communities WA, Westerman Report (Indigenous Psychological Services) 2019, found that Dept of Communities was plagued by widespread and endemic racism;
- The report expressed concerns at rate of aboriginal child removals;
- Despite only 4 per cent of the WA population being Indigenous, the Department of Communities' 2017-2018 annual report showed 55 per cent of the children in state care were Aboriginal.
- By 2020-21, the annual report stated that of the 5,344 children in care, 3,056 were Aboriginal — an increase of more than 2 per cent to 57.2 per cent.

The Western Australia Experience

- Development of the **Cultural Competency Profile for Child Protection (CCP-CP)**
- This psycho-metric tool is unique to Australia in that it is the only tool that has been both culturally and psychometrically validated as a measure of child protection cultural competence in working with Aboriginal people.
- **It measure 5 domains as follows:**
 1. Cultural knowledge;
 2. Skills and abilities; child protection;
 3. Awareness and beliefs;
 4. Resources and linkages;
 5. Organisational cultural competency.

Other services in Ireland: INAR

- Provides Anti -Racism training which focuses on reporting and finding practical responses to racism;
- INAR & FLAC Equal Access Programme: Anti-Racism Advocacy training, launched in 2022 (Knowledge of legislation necessary when taking a case to the WRC, Dismantling Racism).
- This training is based on Responding to Racism guide: How to report Racism and where to find help.
- Hate Crime legislation: Criminal Justice (hate crime) Bill published in April 2021; INAR Love not hate campaign;
- Call for a National Action Plan against Racism;
- Reports and Research, all available online
- Ireport.ie: reports of racism in Ireland.
- INAR Report: Afrophobia in Ireland; racism against people of African descent.

Other services: Irish Council for Civil Liberties

- 2018 Report on hate crimes reported that Ireland has among the highest rates of hate crime against people of African background and transgender people in the EU.
- The Lifecycle of a Hate Crime: Country Report for Ireland found that the hate element of a crime is filtered out in the current lengthy criminal justice process.
- How do people report racist behaviour and how is it investigated?
- Responding to Racism guide: How to report racism and where to find help.

The way forward, practice examples.

- Bystander Intervention Programme, UCC, March 2022. This was aimed at raising awareness about putting our hand up when some-one is doing something wrong.
- This training teaches you to be a by-stander that changes the direction of the event.
- It important to raise awareness of frequency of micro-aggression.
- It is generally the case that people want to do better but don't know how.
- What can you do to support people, its not enough not to be racist, you must be anti-racist.

What can we do?

- The 4D2P Framework (Tedam 2021) for Social Work practice
- Discuss (Build rapport/assess)
- Discover (result of assessment)
- Decide (analysis and decision)
- Disrupt (intervene/make better/improve)

We do not disrupt racism by staying silent.

Examples from the UK (Wayne Reid)

- Black and ethnic minority social workers should not be expected to “fix” racism.
- Social work educators and employers must acknowledge the inherent and intrinsic nature of “whiteness”, “white fragility, white supremacy and white privilege as subconscious default positions in most (if not all) institutions, structures and organisational cultures.
- Publish an authentic anti-racism action plan.
- Recruitment targets;
- Operations: Anti-racism mission statements;
- Use of an honesty box to report discriminatory practices.

Wayne Reid contd:

- Education: Anti-racist education is recognised as being at the heart of developing a more culturally safe and inclusive workforce.
- Education providers de-colonise social work education with the input of Black and ethnic minority academics, social workers and service users.
- Allyship is vital in combatting all aspects of racism.
- Reverse mentoring: enables Black and ethnic minority social workers to mentor senior leaders.

Anti-racism work- moving past the silence: Dr. Muna Abdi

- A recognition of racism, both its intent and impact is essential for developing anti-racist spaces.
- Silence and denial from those that enact and those that experience racism allows racism in all its forms to be sustained in a space.
- A helpful starting point is to develop a shared language and basic racial literacy.
- Naming concrete effects of racism and work our way back to understanding root causes.

Anti-racism work- moving past the silence: Dr. Muna Abdi (contd)

- Every member of the organisations' community needs to develop racial literacy in order to be able to recognise it, name it and challenge it.
- Consulting with community members (particularly people of colour) can lead to increased engagement and investment in anti-racist process.